<u>REMARKS</u>

The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 9, 2005. Claims 1 to 30 are in the application, of which Claims 1, 10, 16, and 25 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over WO 98/59311 (Saunders) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,110,044 (Stern). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns verification and voiding of a voucher after printing by a gaming printer. A human readable validation character string is received by a gaming printer for printing on a voucher. The human readable validation character string is then printed onto the voucher by the gaming printer. A scanned validation character string is subsequently read from the voucher using an optical recognition process as the voucher is being printed. The voucher is verified by comparing the received and scanned validation character strings. If the two validation character strings are different, the voucher may be voided by the printer controller by printing voiding characters or marks on the voucher before the voucher is presented to a player.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to a method for verification of a voucher by a gaming printer. The method comprises: receiving a validation character string by the gaming printer; printing the received validation character string on the voucher by the gaming printer; scanning the voucher for a scanned validation character string; verifying the voucher by the gaming printer using the received validation character string and the scanned validation character

string; and voiding the voucher by the gaming printer by printing voiding marks on the voucher if the voucher is not verified.

In contrast, Saunders discloses a cashless peripheral device connected to a gaming system. A ticket printer prints a bar code on a ticket in response to a cash-out signal from the gaming system. A ticket reader reads the amount printed on the ticket. If the printed value corresponds to the value which should have been printed, a ticket-out transport delivers the printed ticket to the player cashing out from the gaming system. However, Saunders does not disclose voiding the voucher by the gaming printer by printing voiding marks on the voucher if the voucher is not verified. Instead, Saunders discloses that if the information printed on the ticket is not correct, a transport holds the ticket and an error message is sent to a central computer and an error message is displayed to a player.

In the Office Action, it was asserted that an invalid ticket as contemplated in Saunders is the same as voiding a voucher. In the Office Action, it is stated "if the ticket is not verified the invalid (i.e. 'void') ticket is firmly held in the ticket-out transport." Further in the Office Action, the equivalence of "invalid" and "void" is transmuted into equating Saunders' invalid ticket with Applicants' voiding process (See second full paragraph on Page 4 of the Office Action). Applicants' respectfully disagree with the equating of an "invalid" to "void" and "voiding a voucher" as there is no support in Saunders nor support in the gaming industry for such an equivalence.

In Saunders, an invalid ticket is one which has an improperly printed barcode and is either unreadable by a ticket reader in the gaming machine or generates an incorrect value when read by the ticket reader. There is no discussion of actively voiding a ticket, or even use of the words "void" or "voiding" in Saunders. This is because the system disclosed by Saunders is incapable of actively voiding an invalid ticket as the

printer is incapable of retrieving the invalid ticket from the ticket reader. Instead, as disclosed in Saunders, an invalid ticket is merely held in the ticket reader for later retrieval. Therefore, there is no support in Saunders for the Office Action's assertion that an "invalid" ticket is the same as a "voiding a voucher."

In addition, the system of Saunders (known as "verification after print" in the gaming industry) has proven to be impractical when applied in actual gaming environments precisely because "invalid" does not equate to "void" or "voiding." According to Saunders, an invalid ticket must be removed from the ticket reader by an attendant. This has proven to be impractical as players become frustrated and annoyed while waiting for the attendant to service the gaming machine, thus slowing the player's use of the gaming machine. In addition, having an attendant service the gaming machine defeats one of the main purposes of a cashless gaming system, namely reducing the manpower required to service an operating gaming machine. Voiding an invalid voucher allows the invalid voucher to be dispensed from a gaming machine and a new one to be reprinted and dispensed to a player, thus obviating the need for a service call in all but the most extreme print failures.

Furthermore, in contrast to the hypothetical gaming environment disclosed in Saunders, an actual voucher used in an actual gaming environment includes not only a machine readable barcode but human readable validation characters and a cashout amount as well. (See FIG. 1 of the present application). This is because, in an actual gaming environment, there are human actors that must be considered in the voucher manipulation process. The human readable cashout amount printed on the voucher is used to reassure a player that the voucher actually represents the correct cashout amount. The human readable validation characters represent an account number that a human cashier uses to

validate the voucher if the voucher cannot be read by a machine. Because the voucher includes both human readable portions and machine readable portions, voiding is needed to prevent an improperly printed, but still human readable, voucher from being validated by a human.

The presence of both human readable and machine readable portions on a voucher leads to additional problems when voiding is not used. For example, despite the fact invalid vouchers are "firmly" held out of a player's grasp, players have been known to pull invalid vouchers from gaming machines anyway and intimidate human cashiers into paying on the invalid voucher. Rather than confront a player, most cashiers will simply pay out on the invalid voucher thus creating a loss for the gaming machine operator. In addition, verification after print has not been widely adopted because gaming regulators worry that unscrupulous attendants will collect the invalid printed vouchers and cash them using a shill to intimidate the cashier. Voiding of an invalid voucher alleviates these problems because voiding indicates to a human attempting to read the voucher that the voucher has indeed been purposefully voided by a gaming machine, thus reducing the chance a human cashier will agree to pay out on the voucher under duress.

For at least the forgoing reasons, Applicants respectfully disagree with the statements in the Office Action equating "invalid" with "void" and "voiding." Therefore, Applicants have clarified the term "voiding" as used in the claims to include "by printing voiding marks on the voucher." In light of the amendments and deficiencies of the cited art discussed above, Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

Stern discloses enhancing security in issuing and redeeming gaming tickets using machine-readable indicium, such as barcoding, embodied in a payout ticket from a

gaming machine. When the ticket is presented for redemption, the machine-readable indicium is read automatically to provide electronic signals which are then processed electronically to determine whether the ticket is valid.

As Stern is concerned entirely with problems associated with redeeming properly printed payout tickets, Stern is silent with regard to methods for verifying a voucher during the printing process in order to prevent issuance of vouchers that cannot be redeemed because the voucher was improperly printed. While Stern does mention OCR, Stern fails to disclose any features of how OCR might be used for verification of a voucher before the voucher is issued. Specifically, Stern fails to disclose printing voiding marks on an improperly printed voucher. Stern thus assumes that the ticket being presented for redemption has been properly printed and is completely silent on preventing issuance of an improperly printed voucher.

Modifying the cashless peripheral device of Saunders in light of the disclosures of Stern does not result in a device having all of the features of Applicants' claimed gaming printer. Namely, neither Saunders nor Stern disclose voiding a voucher by printing voiding marks on the voucher by a gaming printer if the voucher is not verified. Saunders only discloses a ticket-out transport that can hold an invalid ticket. Stern never addresses management of an invalid voucher at all. Therefore, the combination of Saunders with Stern does not teach or suggest all of the features of Applicants' invention as claimed in independent Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claim 1 is in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

Amended independent Claim 10 is directed to an apparatus that implements the method of Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants submit that the foregoing discussion

regarding Claim 1 applies equally to Claim 10. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claim 10 is in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

Amended independent Claim 16 calls for, in part, printing a validation character string and barcode on the voucher and verifying the voucher using the scanned validation character string and the scanned barcode. If the voucher cannot be verified, the voucher is voided by printing voiding marks on the voucher.

As discussed above, neither Saunders nor Stern discloses voiding of a voucher by printing if the voucher cannot be verified. In addition, neither Saunders nor Stern disclose verifying a voucher using a scanned validation character string and a scanned barcode by the gaming printer. Therefore, the combination of Saunders with Stern does not teach or suggest all of the features of Applicants' invention as claimed in independent Claim 16. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claim 16 is in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.
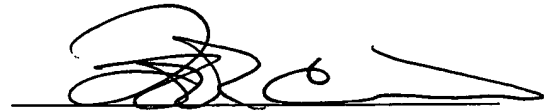
Independent Claim 25 is an apparatus claim corresponding to Claim 16. Applicants submit that the foregoing discussion regarding Claim 16 applies equally to Claim 25. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claim 25 is in condition for allowance and respectfully request same.

The other pending claims in this application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for at least the same reasons. However, individual consideration of each dependent claim on its own merits is respectfully requested as each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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